WE CLAIM:

1.   A method of enabling authorized access to a network, comprising the steps of:

        a)   requesting authentication over the network;

        b)   printing encoded, machine-readable indicia having parts of different light reflectivity which identify an authenticated user on a portable, physical ticket in response to the requesting step; and

        c)   presenting the physical ticket to a reader for electro-optically reading the indicia to gain access to the network.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein the requesting step is performed by sending an electronic request to an authentication server on the network.

3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the printing is performed on a disposable medium.

4.   The method of claim 1, wherein the printing is performed by printing a two-dimensional bar code symbol.

5.   The method of claim 1, wherein the requesting step includes the step of requesting access to the network for a predetermined time, after which access to the network is terminated.

6.   The method of claim 1, and further comprising situating the network in a public venue.

7.   A method of enabling authorized access to a network, the method comprising the steps of:

a) requesting and receiving from a key distribution center over the network an electronic ticket signal identifying a user and an application server to be accessed on the network;

b) printing encoded, machine-readable indicia having parts of different light reflectivity which identify the user and the application server to be accessed on a portable, physical ticket based on receipt of the electronic ticket signal; and

c) presenting the physical ticket to a reader for electro-optically reading the indicia to obtain from the indicia, data for identifying the user and the application server, to authorize the identified user to access the network and the identified application server.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the key distribution center includes an authentication server and a ticket granting server, and wherein the requesting and receiving steps are performed by initially sending a request to the authentication server for access to the ticket granting server, by thereupon receiving a response containing a session key encrypted with a ticket server key, by thereupon sending a subsequent request to the ticket granting server for access to the application sever, and by subsequently receiving the electronic ticket signal from the ticket granting server.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the requesting step includes the step of requesting access to the application server for a predetermined time, after which access to the application server is terminated.

10. An arrangement for enabling authorized access to a network, comprising:

a) an authentication center for authorizing access to an application server by receiving an authentication request from a user, and by responding with an electronic ticket signal;

b)   a printer responsive to the electronic ticket signal for printing encoded, machine-readable indicia having parts of different light reflectivity which identify the user and an application server to be accessed on a portable, physical ticket; and

c)   a reader for electro-optically reading the indicia to authorize the identified user and the identified application server.

11.   The arrangement of claim 10, wherein the ticket is a printed disposable sheet.

12.   The arrangement of claim 10, wherein the indicia is a two-dimensional bar code symbol.

13.   The arrangement of claim 12, wherein the symbol is PDF-417.

14.   The arrangement of claim 10, wherein the ticket contains time information for granting access to the application server for a predetermined time period.

15.   The arrangement of claim 10, wherein the network is located in a public venue.

16.   The arrangement of claim 10, wherein the network is a wireless local area network.